

# REVIVAL OF "EURYANTHE" AN OPERATIC EVENT

**Interesting Facts About Weber's Work Which Is to Be Given at the Metropolitan Saturday**

By W. J. HENDERSON.

**H**ANDEL said that his cook was more of a musician than Gluck and Rossini declared that Weber's music gave him a pain in his stomach. Handel's operas have been permanently retired from all the stages of the world. Rossini's are not dead, and "Barbiere di Siviglia" seems likely to hold the stage for many years to come. But his opinion of Weber was not shared by some considerable musicians. Beethoven called the composer of "Euryanthe" as "a devil of a fellow," and Berlioz's work on orchestration contains many illustrations taken from Weber's scores and many examinations of "What a poet!" Furthermore it was Berlioz who wrote the dedications and made the other necessary preparations for the production of "Der Freischütz" at the Grand Opera in 1821.

How far the enthusiasm of these masters will influence us in these rarified days of harmonic scales and Franco-Russian explanations of melodic deserts can hardly be estimated. At any rate when Mr. Gatti-Casazza revives Weber's "Euryanthe" for us on Saturday we shall have the peculiar experience of hearing an opera which was produced in Vienna in 1822 and which is now the less a novelty for most of the present generation of operagoers.

It has always been a matter for wonder that Weber, who had strong dramatic instincts, should have been carried away by the singular libretto of this opera. No one has explained how the writer Helmina von Chézy obtained her hold on the composer. She was a rather alarming personage who had married twice and made a failure of it each time. Chézy wrote, "She has been described to me as that most delectable of all beings, an ugly, unhappy, unsuccessful woman of letters—a shatertly Sappho, from whom all men shrank—eager, warm hearted, and did I mistake not fat?"

The story which this Katisha of letters produced was based on an old romance which signifies nothing just now. The scene is laid in France and there are five important characters. These are Adolar, a young knight; his betrothed Euryanthe; Lysiart, enemy of Adolar; a villain and therefore a tosser; Eplatine, who loves Adolar and consequently hates Euryanthe; and Helene is a contrast, and a harmless necessary King to preside over all. In the original story Lysiart declared that he could lead Euryanthe to betray her lover, and he proved it by telling of a violet mark on her body which was known only to her husband. The truth, however, was that Eplatine knew of it and told Lysiart.

This incident seemed a trifle too strong for the ancient blue stocking who wrote the libretto, so she invented a complicated tale of a sister of Adolar, Emma by name, who, having been guilty of the crime of suicide by the use of a poisoned ring, was condemned to be a wandering spirit. Adolar, under Parthenope, takes a tremendous oath not to betray this secret, but she tells it to the crafty Eplatine.

This active woman promptly communicates it to Lysiart, who appears at a fete given by the King and exhibits the ring as proof that he had gained the favor of Euryanthe. Adolar, being an opera person, swallows this story whole and proclaims his betrothed as a traitress.

He conducts her to a lonely precipitous gorge and is about to slay her when a great serpent (evidently escaped from Mozart's "Magic Flute") appears, so she invents a complicated tale of a sister of Adolar, Emma by name, who, having been guilty of the crime of suicide by the use of a poisoned ring, was condemned to be a wandering spirit. Adolar, under Parthenope, takes a tremendous oath not to betray this secret, but she tells it to the crafty Eplatine.

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This book, stupid and unreal as it is, affords opportunities for brilliant stage pictures, and these opportunities will certainly not be lost by the present direction of the Metropolitan Opera House. As for the music, that will speak for itself. It is interesting, however, to note what Henry Chorley, the English critic, said when he heard the opera in Dresden in 1822:

"Were I called upon to name the modern German opera which has musically the most excited me I should cite Euryanthe at Dresden. So strong indeed was the excitement in the theatre as to render me unconscious of the many crudities contained in the score. I felt carried away not so much by a fervor as by a fever of music."

"One knows the composition to be in many places strained, in many more patchy; the airs are constructed on unusual and arbitrary forms of rhythm; there is no prophesying



Clara Gabrilowitsch at the Little Theatre, Dec. 15.



Mme. Olive Fremstad at Carnegie Hall, Dec. 16.

the clear and restorative formidism of the change of chord which is next to come. But these faults are left in close study far more than in stage intercourse, while, to compensate for them, we have character, color, melody and the boldest rendering of the strongest emotions—tenderness, wonder, pity, passion, terror and ecstasy."

Setting aside his famous critics' comments on those merits of the music which puzzled him in those piping days of Italian opera and which are simple enough to be experienced listeners of today, we must accept his warm praise of the merits of the score as highly significant, coming, as it did, from a writer whose mind was long attuned to Rossini, and who found himself offended even by the rude assaults of Cimarosa's early works.

Sir Julius Benedict, a distinguished English composer, was a pupil and follower of Weber. He has left us an interesting record of Weber's method of composing at the time when he was at work on "Euryanthe." In the first place, he committed the text to memory, thus making it a constantly present influence, a part of his daily thinking. "Then the idea of a whole musical piece would flash upon his mind, like the bursting of light into darkness. It would then remain there unrefined, gradually assuming a perfect shape and not till this process was attained would he put it down on paper. His transcriptions were generally made on the return from his solitary walks."

After this he wrote out in full the vocal parts and made memorandum of these and there as to the harmonies and the instrumentation. The mental development of his plan was already so complete that the orchestration flowed from his pen as from that of a copyist. The scoring of "Euryanthe" occupied six days only.

This introspective and concentrated method brought about brilliant results, nor can we avoid the conclusion that Weber's outdoor thinking had a foundation of mental health which it shared with the masterpieces of Beethoven and Schubert. But this composer had also a creed, and it was the forerunner of the creed of Wagner.

He defined opera as "an art work complete in itself, in which all the parts and contributions of the related and utilized arts meet and disappear in each other and, in a manner, form a new world by their own destruction." He believed that a libretto should not be constructed with a view to its effects upon which to hang strings of pretty music, but that there should be a organic union of the various arts employed in dramatic representation.

His theory as to the purpose of lyric music was fully set forth in these words: "It is the first and most sacred duty of song to be truth in with the utmost fidelity possible in declamation."

He furthermore had no sympathy with

## METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE.

Weber's "Euryanthe" is a romantic opera in three acts and six scenes which has not been heard in New York since the season of 1887-1888, will be given by General Manager Gatti-Casazza at the Metropolitan Opera House on Saturday afternoon. The cast will be as follows: Euryanthe, Mme. Hompesch; Lysiart, Mme. Ober; Bertha, Miss Garrison; Adolar, Mr. Semitsch; Lysiart, Mr. Weil; the King, Mr. Macdonald; Rudolph, Mr. Blisch; Arturo Toscanini will conduct the performance.

Other operas of the week will be as follows:

"Der Rosenkavalier," tomorrow evening, with Mmes. Ober, Hempel, Schumann, Curtis, Matfield, and Messrs. Goritz, Weil, Althouse, Weiss, Audisio, Schlegel, Ruydahl, Bloch and Bayer.

"Tristan und Isolde," on Wednesday evening, with Mmes. Gaido, Matfield, and Messrs. Curtis, Weil, Althouse, Weiss, Audisio, Schlegel, Ruydahl, Bloch and Bayer.

"La Gioconda," on Thursday evening, with Mmes. Curtis, Matzenauer and Duchene, and Messrs. Curtis, Amato, De Segurola, Reschigl, Begue and Audisio. Mr. Polacco conducting.

"La Bohème," on Friday evening, with Mmes. Curtis, Matzenauer and Duchene, and Messrs. Curtis, Amato, De Segurola, Reschigl, Begue and Audisio. Mr. Polacco conducting.

"Tosca," on Saturday evening, with Mmes. Curtis, Matzenauer and Duchene, and Messrs. Curtis, Amato, De Segurola, Reschigl, Begue and Audisio. Mr. Polacco conducting.

"The Educational Chamber Music Society, founded by Leo Levy and conducted by Modest Altschuler, conductor of the Russian Symphony Orchestra, will give its fourth concert of the season this evening in the Strand Auditorium of the Educational Alliance. Compositions by Lipstein, Tchaikovsky, Liszt, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Schubert, Schumann, etc., will be performed.

"Faust," on Sunday evening, with Mmes. Curtis, Matzenauer and Duchene, and Messrs. Curtis, Amato, De Segurola, Reschigl, Begue and Audisio. Mr. Polacco conducting.

"The Musical Art Society, with its choir of seventy singers under the direction of Frank Macdonald, will give its first concert of this season in Carnegie Hall on Tuesday evening, December 15. The "Salve Regina," to be sung at this concert, is one of the most famous antiphons of the Roman Catholic



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From this attitude toward his art came the strange things which troubled Chorley, but which will seem in no way strange to us. Of the development of such imposing numbers as "Oscar" or "Leise leise" in "Der Freischütz," numbers fusing in one connected piece, recitative of the broadest dramatic type, aria, cavatina and bravura, only historic account could be given. These extended arias, which were astonishing in the early part of the last century, do of course the hearer of today, while their splendid eloquence and emotional power fill him with admiration. Their companions will be found in "Euryanthe."

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